

**EPA**

**Moderator: Lina Younes**  
**April 6, 2011**  
**2:00 p.m. ET**

Operator: Good afternoon, my name is (Darla) and I will be your conference operator today. At this time, I'd like to welcome everyone to the Environmental Education Grant Solicitation conference call. All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. If you should need assistance during the call, please press star then zero and an operator come back in line to assist you. Thank you.

Miss Lina Younes, you may begin your conference.

Lina Younes: Yes, thank you. Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us in our second conference call on the Office of Environmental Education grants process and our current grant solicitation.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is accepting grant application for \$1.9 million in funding for environmental education projects and programs. The purpose of the grant is to promote environmental stewardship and help develop knowledgeable and responsible students, teachers and citizens. EPA expects to award at least 20 grants nationwide ranging from a minimum of 15,000 to a maximum of 100,000, and will accept applications until May 2nd 2011.

I will turn over the call to Karen Scott, our Environmental Education Specialist, who will guide you through the process. We will not be taking any questions on this call, but you may send them by e-mail to [EEgrants@epa.gov](mailto:EEgrants@epa.gov). Karen?

Karen Scott: Hello, everybody. This is Karen Scott. I am an Environmental Education Specialist here at EPA and grants program manager for the EE grants program at EPA.

As Lina said, we will be taking no questions during this call, but if any questions come to mind during the call or after it, you may send your questions to [EEgrants@epa.gov](mailto:EEgrants@epa.gov). We also have a lot of questions that we've gotten before from other applicants listed online on a Frequently Asked Questions page, which is on our Web site, which is [epa.gov/education](http://epa.gov/education). So, feel free to go to that site to look for questions that may come up as well.

Before getting into the details of the, of the solicitation and some of the things that I think you should be looking for when you're putting in your application, I do want to make a note that this is a highly competitive program. EPA will probably be funding less than 10 percent of the applications that we receive, if things go as they have in past years.

Last year for example, we received over 1,200 applications nationwide, but we're able to fund only about 100 of those proposed projects. This year we anticipate there will probably be an even higher application to award ratio.

So, we're hoping that this call is going to help you in putting together your application, both for applicants that are new to our program and those who have put in applications before.

I'm going to focus the presentation today on various aspects of the Solicitation Notice. Primarily, I'm going to go over; first of all, the major changes to this year's solicitation over previous year's solicitation. Secondly, I'm going to point out ways that we have come to find applicants, or things applicants can do to make their applications more competitive. And finally, I'm going to go over how you can submit an application. The two ways you can do that and what documents you're going to need to submit with that application.

I hope you have a copy of the Solicitation in front of you or somewhere where you can access it that will help you as I go through this presentation, to refer

to various sections of the Solicitation Notice. If you don't have it handy, you might want to jot down these section references I make as I go through these various aspects of the application process.

So, first of all, of the changes from previous solicitation. The Office of Environmental Education has existed since the early 1990s. And most of the Solicitation Notices we have put out have been primarily the same since then until this year.

The changes that are most interest to applicants are the following.

No grants this year, or no grant applications this year will be accepted or reviewed by headquarters, who do not send any applications to headquarters. No grants will be issued from headquarters. All applications should be sent to the region where the project will take place. Please see Section VII of the Solicitation Notice to see who the appropriate regional agency contact would be for your application. All applications will be reviewed and awarded at the regional level.

Second. The upper dollar limit for proposed EPA funds for projects is lower than it has been in previous years. This year, the upper dollar limit is \$100,000. In previous years, it had been \$200,000, but this year, the upper limit is \$100,000. The lowest dollar limit that you can propose for your project (receive) funds from us is \$15,000. So, the lowest dollar limit now is \$15,000.

Third. The project start date in these proposals should be no earlier than September 1st 2011. In previous years, we have usually asked for a July 1st start date. This year though, we want you to propose an, a start date of no earlier than September 1st 2011.

Fourth. There's a threshold eligibility requirement that projects be new to the EPA Environmental Education Program. In other words, as an applicant, you can never have received funding from the EPA EE program for this particular proposed project. I will be describing what I mean by that in a little bit more

detail a little later in this discussion. But this is a new threshold eligibility requirement.

Fifth. In order to be eligible, all applications must be educational in approach and must address at least one of EPA's educational priorities, which both were required in previous years. But this year, we have also decided to require, for the first time, that grants must focus on one of EPA's seven key environmental priorities. These are all listed in Section III of the solicitation and I'll be discussing them, again, a little bit later. But basically, the seven key environmental priorities, one of which you need to select for your proposal, would be taking action on climate change, improving air quality, assuring the safety of chemicals, cleaning up our communities, protecting America's waters, expanding the conversation on environmentalism and working for environmental justice and finally, building strong state and tribal partnership. These are listed not only in this solicitation, but also on EPA's Web site.

Sixth. There will be a greater emphasis this year on expanding the conversation on environmentalism by including a variety of audiences in your proposed project. This is not a threshold eligibility requirement, but up to five points will be awarded during the application review for reaching a diversity of audiences and demonstrating how the project will address environmental issues that are more likely to affect the audiences targeted. So again, it's not a threshold eligibility requirement, but you will or you can receive up to four points for including a diversity of audiences, up to five points.

Seventh. In the differences from previous solicitations, we now have something called a Project Uniqueness factor. This has replaced what we previously called exceptional factors in our solicitation notices. You can find the project uniqueness factor described in the Section IV list of what should be included in the narrative portion of your proposal.

So, if you have something in your project that you feel makes it unique in the field of environmental education, here in Section IV, where you will be able to highlight that for reviewers, and I'll be mentioning that again in a little bit when I go through the various parts of a, of an application.

Eighth. More clarity and emphasis has been put on partnership letters of commitment and a statement has been added that if no letter is provided from a partner, it will be assumed the applicant has no partners. So, be sure, if you do have a partner, that you get a letter of commitment from that partner that describes what their role in the project will be.

Ninth. There's a section that is now called Programmatic Capability and Past Performance that you will have to include in your submission. This section replaces a section that we used to call Technical Qualifications and Staff Experience or Expertise. This is also the section where we are now asking applicants to identify very clearly any grants they have previously received from this program, from the EPA EE grant program. And this would be in addition to the list where you would put all other federal grants you've received over the last three years. So, be very careful that you do, in that list, have a special section that is clearly labeled as grants that have been received by you from the EPA EE grant program.

So, those are the major differences from other solicitations that we've had in the past that are now in this Solicitation Notice.

So, next I'll be going over some tips that we find would be helpful to applicants in making their application more competitive.

First and foremost, I can't emphasize strongly enough that you need to read our Solicitation Notice completely. The whole document, from beginning to end, before you start writing your proposal. Familiarize yourself with the solicitation document.

Pay especially close attention to the definitions of environmental education and EPA's educational priorities that are in Section I, listed in (B) and (C). Section I, (B) and (C). They go over in detail what, how we define environmental education and what our educational priorities are.

You should also carefully look at the list of EPA's environmental priorities, those that I just listed, the seven administrative priorities, and they are listed in

Section I(C) of this solicitation. So, take special note of all of those and then go through the threshold eligibility requirement very carefully in Section III.

If you do not fulfill any of these eligibility requirements, your proposal could be eliminated for consideration before it even goes through the review process. So, first and foremost, make sure that the application is complete before submitting it. An application that has missing sections or is otherwise incomplete could be eliminated for further consideration.

Second. Make sure you meet the application deadline. The deadline is May 2nd 2011. That means that your application must be postmarked by that date, by either the U.S. Postal Service or by a commercial delivery service, if you're going to be submitting a hard copy application. If you're going to be submitting your application through, electronically through grants.gov, then you must submit that application to grants.gov before midnight, before midnight, so by 11:59 P.M. on May 2nd 2011.

I'll be going over in more detail the difference between the hard copy submission and electronic submission toward the end of my presentation.

The third in the eligibility requirement is that you must make sure you are an eligible entity before you submit your proposal. So, read that section very carefully. In Section III, we define the eligible entities.

Note that an individual student or educator is not eligible to submit an application. An application has to be submitted by a local education agency or local government agency that can demonstrate an education or environmental mandate. Or you can submit as a college or university, and this would include community colleges. Or a state education or environmental agency can apply.

A 501(c) (3) nonprofits can apply. This is the only category of nonprofits that are eligible in this program, a 501(c) (3). So, be very careful, if you are a nonprofit, that you have the 501(c) (3) status.

Also, noncommercial educational broadcasting entities may apply. And finally, a tribal education agency is eligible to apply.

So, that is the list of the eligible entities for our program.

To go on with other threshold eligibility requirements, you must have a 25 percent match and the match that you provide, and this must be a 25 percent of the total of your budget. So, 25 percent match can come from a cash contribution or in-kind contribution. And these contributions come; can come from your own organization or from a partner.

In-kind contribution can come from things like the salaries of people in your program, who are going to be spending time working in the program. Or they can come from volunteers, who, if you can demonstrate that they, it can demonstrate that their market value of the time that they're spending in your project. You can also use volunteers' time as an in-kind contribution. Sometimes, use of equipment or use of things like room space can also be considered as an in-kind contribution.

But if you have any questions about any of these, please make sure that you either look at our Frequent Asked Questions page on our Web site at [epa.gov/education](http://epa.gov/education) or submit a question to me at [EEgrants.gov](mailto:EEgrants.gov) or [EEgrants@epa.gov](mailto:EEgrants@epa.gov).

Fifth in the threshold eligibility requirement is that you ask from us a minimum of \$15,000 or a maximum of \$100,000 and of course, anything in between. But if you ask for less than \$15,000 or more than \$100,000, again, your application could be eliminated from consideration.

Sixth. Be sure your project is primarily educational and identifies at least one educational priority, priority that you will focus on in your project. You can choose more than one educational priority, but if you're choosing more than one, you have to be very careful and clear where your focus will be. So, choose one as your main focus, even if you identify others as being part of your project.

The educational priorities that EPA uses are capacity building, educational advancement, community projects, human health and the environment, environmental education teaching skills and career development. These are all defined, all listed, in Section I(C) of the solicitation. So, be sure to read those carefully.

Seventh, and this is continuing the list of threshold eligibility requirements, seventh, you must identify at least one environmental priority that your project will focus on. These are the priorities that I identified earlier as being EPA's administrative priorities. They are listed in Section I(C) of the solicitation, as well as on the front page of the EPA Web site.

Again, you can identify more than one of these as ones that you will use in your project, but you must choose one that is the main focus of your project.

Eighth. In the list of threshold eligibility requirement, you must make it clear that you, as an applicant, has never before received funding from the EPA EE program for this particular proposed project. As I mentioned before, you're going to make this clear by listing all of the grants previously received by your organization from our program.

We are also asking that you make a statement upfront in the project summary of your proposal that you have never before received money from our program for this particular proposed project.

Ninth in the list of eligibility requirement is that you must make sure you do not propose any ineligible activities in your project. Ineligible activities include technical training of environmental management professionals, information or outreach without an educational focus, advocacy promoting a particular point of view, lobbying or political activity, non-educational research or development and finally, construction projects.

We've received a lot of questions lately about construction projects. So, note that both in Section III of the solicitation and on our online FAQs, the frequently asked questions, we do further clarify what we mean by construction projects. So, please read both of those carefully, but if you still have any questions, be sure to send a question in the [EEgrants@epa.gov](mailto:EEgrants@epa.gov).



So, that covers all of the eligibility requirement that we have in our, in our solicitation. So, be very careful to go through all of those. Make sure that you don't include something that's going to get you eliminated before your project is even reviewed.

Next in our tips of how to write a successful application, I want to call your attention to the fact that we have an online document called the Tips for Developing Successful Grant Applications. And that is on our Web site [epa.gov/education](http://epa.gov/education).

I'm just going to highlight a few of the important tips from this document, but please go to that on our Web site and read through it carefully. It can be very helpful for you in developing your application.

So, if you have both tips that come from that document would include, number one, base your project goal on the needs of the community you will be reaching. Also base your project goals on sound environmental science and educational principles. Make sure the educational principles aim to enhance critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making skills.

Two. Have a clear focus and clearly define your measurable, quantitative and qualitative outputs that you will complete during the project period.

Third. Include long-term environmental and educational outcomes in your proposal, especially in the logic model. It is particularly important to make sure that your project promotes environmental stewardship.

Fourth. Choose your audience carefully and explain why this audience was chosen. If you are reaching diverse populations, and by diverse populations, we include, but do not limit that to low income minority and tribal communities. If you're trying to reach these communities, be sure to explain that in your proposal, as well as explain how the environmental issue you have chosen to focus on may affect this audience in your project.

And finally, have a realistic timeline and budget. A note about the timeline. You can propose either a one, or two-year project or some other timeframe in between the two. Your timeline must show how you will accomplish your goals in the time proposed.

But note if you are proposing a time period longer than one year, the total money you request from us, from us still has to be within the limit that I mentioned before, a minimum of \$15,000 and a maximum of \$100,000. And the amount that you request, its total amount, would simply be distributed over timeline you have proposed. So, in other words if you propose a two-year project, that doesn't mean you would get, if, say, if you are requesting \$40,000, it doesn't mean you would get \$40,000 for each year. It would mean you would get a total of \$40,000 spread over at the time proposed. So, if it was two years, the \$40,000 would be spread over the two years.

Your budget should be clear, and easy to read, and should include that required 25 percent match and that's, again, 25 percent of the total budget, not 25 percent of the amount of fund you're requesting from us.

So again, those are just some highlights from the Tips for Developing Successful Grant Applications. Please go to our Web site and read the entire document before putting your proposal together.

What I'm going to do now is go over how you submit your application, including what the contents of that application should include.

Section IV of this solicitation goes into detail about the necessary contents of a submitted application for a proposal. And also explains how to submit that proposal. Please read this section carefully and please do not submit extra, unnecessary materials like maps, brochures, CDs, et cetera, that are not part of materials require for you to submit. We do not look at those materials, those extra materials you send, and neither do the reviewers. So, please do not send any of those extra, unnecessary materials.

Before going over the contents of the application, I'll go over how to submit the application and that can be done in one of two ways. You can either make

a hard copy submission and if you choose to do that, you can go to our Web site, [epa.gov/education](http://epa.gov/education), and download any of the forms that you need.

Then what you need to do is make two copies of everything that you are going to submit. So, in other words, you'll be submitting to us an original and two copies by U.S. Postal Service or commercial delivery service, and make sure it's postmarked by 11:59 P.M. on May 2nd 2011.

Make sure, too, that if you're giving a hard copy submission, that you address the submission to the regional contact in the region in which your project will be located.

Second seven of the solicitation. List the states that are included in each region, each EPA region, as well as the names and addresses of the people and offices to whom you should send your application. So, make sure you look for the region in which your project will be located.

If it happens that when you look at the lists of states for each region, that your project is going to be located in more than one region, please try to select the region in which the majority of the project activities will be taking place. So, that's what you do for a hard copy submission.

For an electronic submission, (your) need, you will need to go online as soon as possible to the site [grants.gov](http://grants.gov), G-R-A-N-T-S dot gov, [grants.gov](http://grants.gov). You need to go there at least a week before you intend to submit your application because you need to register on that site first and the registration process takes at least a week. So, as soon as possible, have an authorized representative from your organization to go to the [grants.gov](http://grants.gov) site and start the registration process.

All the forms that you will need for a submission can be found on their site, that [grants.gov](http://grants.gov) site. And again, you will need to complete that submission by 11:59 P.M. on May 2nd 2011.

The contents of the submission that you will be making, whether you do it by hard copy or by electronic submission, can be found in Section IV(C) of this

solicitation, as well as a list in Appendix B, on something called the Checklist for submission.

So, basically, what you're going to have to submit is a Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance. You will also have to submit an SF, or standard form, 424A entitled Budget Information. You will also have to submit a Work plan.

The work plan is basically the narrative of your proposal. This can be done in a Word document or any other Word processing program. The work plan is not to exceed seven pages, single space. The contents of that work plan will be your project summary, a project description and a project evaluation.

The project summary is just a general overview. We recommend that that be no longer than one page. The project summary is also where you state clearly upfront that you have not received money from our program, from the EPA EE grant program for this project in the past.

The project description is really the meat of your proposal description. It details your plan project and this is where you include the what, why, how and who of your project. This is also where you will include the information about what makes your project unique, if you feel it has some unique characteristics.

Again, please go to Section IV(C) of this solicitation in order to read more about what we expect to be included in the project summary and project description.

Finally, in the work plan, you'll be including your project evaluation plan. Please go to a University of Michigan Web site for ideas and how to create a good evaluation plan for an environmental education project.

The Web site I'm going to be giving you was partially funded by EPA EE funds to help people like yourself develop good evaluation plan for their EE projects. The Web site is listed in this solicitation notice and on our Web site, and I'm going to give you to you here. It is <http://meera>, that's M-E-E-R-A,

dot S as in Sam, N as in Nancy, R-E, dot U-M as in Mary, I-C-H dot E-D-U. So, again, that's [http://meera, M-E-E-R-A, .snre.umich.edu](http://meera.snre.umich.edu). But please look at the solicitation in Section IV(C), if you think you may have misunderstood any part of that Web site. We do list that URL in this solicitation.

So, that would be everything in your work plan and that's really the meat or the heart of your proposal. But other things we expect you to include in your submission, in your application, would be the budget, which would include your non-federal match, that 25 percent required match.

The budget, the detailed budget is not included in the page limit, that seven-page limit, for the Work plan. So, we do expect a good detail, clear budget separate from the work plan.

We also expect Appendices, which are not included in that seven-page page limit. The appendices will include your timeline; your logic model in which you'll show your outputs and outcomes, a section called program capability and past performance, which is where you'll list past federal grants you've received, especially noting the ones you received from this EPA EE grant program.

And finally for your appendices, you'll be including any partnership letters of commitment that you have. You will need to include letters for any partners that you have, explaining their role in the project. But do not send letters of recommendation or endorsement. They will not be considered by reviewers or by EPA staff in reviewing your project.

Finally, before making your submission, make sure you review Section V of this solicitation. Section V is where we show how many points, the maximum points; we will give for each section of the proposal or application. By reviewing Section V, you will get an idea of where we put the most important or weight, in the proposal. We use the 100-point scale.

Applications will be reviewed by EPA staff and/or external review team(s). They will be scored and ranked, and referred to selection officials, who will make the decision of who will get funded based on not just the scores and the

ranking, but other factors as well, such as how much variety and range we have so far in geographic areas that were trying to reach, environmental issues that have been proposed, EPA priorities and audiences. All of this is described in Section V of this solicitation notice. So, please read the complete solicitation.

Please check with EPA regional contact to verify that your application has been received, especially if you don't get a notice from anyone after a few days after submission. Note that it could take several months before you hear from anybody as to whether or not you have received an award.

If you have any questions about anything we've gone over today, please send your questions to [EEgrants@epa.gov](mailto:EEgrants@epa.gov). Again, this is a highly competitive program. Most likely this year, we will be able to fund less than 10 percent of the applications received. So, please be meticulous in your writing and submission of proposals and applications.

Best of luck to all of you and thank you for your interest in environmental education and in this program. The transcript for this particular conference call ...

Lina Younes: Two days.

Karen Scott: are going to be posted in approximately two days. So, we're hoping by the end of the day on Friday of this week, the transcript for this conference call will be on our Web site.

We are also planning to post a URL that you will be able, or a link, to a recording of this call and we're hoping that that will be done before the end of the day today.

And again, I thank you for your interest in this program and for your interest in environmental education in general and thank you for participating in the conference call today.

Lina Younes: Thank you, Karen, for your very detailed description of our current grant solicitation and the overall grant process. Once again, we urge the public to send any questions to the following e-mail, which is [EEgrants@epa.gov](mailto:EEgrants@epa.gov), and to view our environmental education program. You can also visit our Web site at [www.epa.gov/education](http://www.epa.gov/education). So, have a nice day.

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